

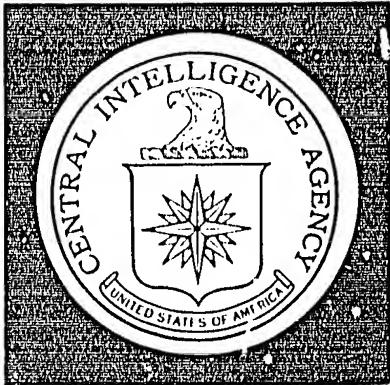
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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

WEEKLY SUMMARY

Special Report

Peking's Drive to Offset Soviet and US Influence in Europe

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PEKING'S DRIVE TO OFFSET SOVIET AND US INFLUENCE IN EUROPE

As part of Peking's ongoing competition with Moscow and Washington, the Chinese over the past decade have attempted to exploit changing international developments in order to improve China's relatively weak standing abroad. Throughout the early sixties Peking devoted considerable attention to the Afro-Asian third world, where the emergence of newly independent states raised Chinese hopes that these states might be inclined to lean toward China and away from Washington and Moscow. Although maintaining a continuing interest in the Afro-Asian world, the Chinese have noticeably shifted attention to the economically and politically more powerful states of West and East Europe during the past two years. Most significantly, Peking has taken an increasingly positive attitude toward what it sees as more assertive and independent policies developing among many European states against the dominant influence of America and Russia on the continent. Seeing a common interest with these states against the superpowers, the Chinese have focused particularly on wooing the more important, independent-minded governments, notably France, Romania, and Yugoslavia, while also making significant gains with long alienated, but potentially friendly states, such as Great Britain.

The Chinese appear to believe that this new posture will not only enhance their general international leverage and reinforce their long-standing claim to be a major world power, but will also outflank the Soviet Union and the United States in Europe. Peking calculates that both powers consequently will be forced to devote increased attention to their own positions in Europe and more importantly, will presumably be less able to maintain or increase their continuing diplomatic effort against, and military encirclement of, China.

The Chinese, of course, recognize that geography, as well as their comparative lack of political and economic resources, precludes any major catalytic or leadership role for China in directing European nations away from Washington or Moscow. Peking nevertheless plans to expand its discreet but growing position on the continent. The positive results of Chinese efforts over the past two years, together with the likely growth over the long term of the desire and potential of European states to be free from great power influence, seem to augur well for further Chinese progress.

Peking's Perspective on Europe

China's recent active approach to Europe stands in sharp contrast to its unenthusiastic and sparse effort there over the past two decades. For many years, Peking's European policy remained

strictly constrained by a lack of common interest between China and the countries of Europe and by the wide divergence of Peking's ideological views from those of most European states. By and large, Peking remained preoccupied with its national survival and developments in Asia and

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Chinese Communist Representation in Europe



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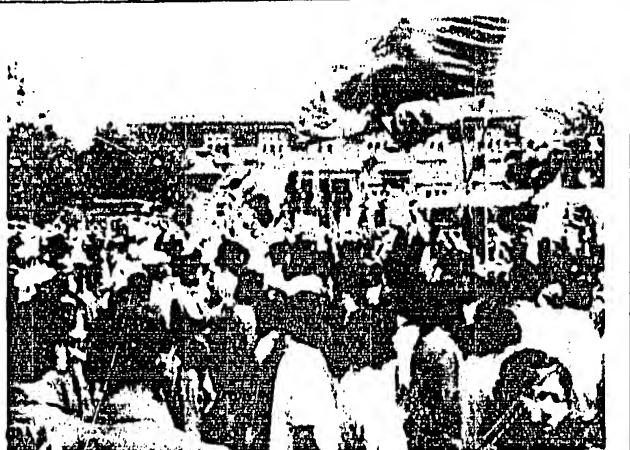
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devoted overwhelming attention to events there. Ideologically, Peking generally viewed Western Europe as a bastion of capitalist states aligned closely with China's chief enemy, the United States. Eastern Europe, on the other hand, was seen at first as a private Soviet domain; later, as the Sino-Soviet dispute developed, it was regarded for the most part as a collection of lackluster regimes obediently following the lead of Kremlin "revisionists." Although there were some noteworthy instances of Chinese attention to European affairs, such as Peking's brief efforts to cultivate East European regimes following the Polish and Hungarian uprisings in the mid-fifties and its attempt to entice diplomatic recognition from France in the early sixties, China generally viewed the continent as an area of low priority.

By the mid-sixties, China's European interests were confined chiefly to small footholds in East and West Europe. Among Communist states, China remained on close terms only with Albania. Peking's increasingly heavy-handed posture in the Sino-Soviet dispute rapidly undermined all but a facade of good relations with the fence-sitting Ceausescu government of Romania. In Western Europe, Peking focused chiefly on maintaining correct diplomatic ties with a few chosen states, notably the Scandinavian countries and France, while gradually developing commercial ties with economically more important states such as West Germany and Great Britain.

This selective but weak position was further undermined and disrupted as China retreated into an isolated and rigidly ideological shell during the Cultural Revolution. All Chinese ambassadors in Europe were recalled, and diplomatic activity in Peking and abroad came to a virtual halt, removing even the thin veneer of diplomatic courtesy that had previously covered Peking's strong differences with most European states. More important, shrill Chinese protests and violent demonstrations in China seriously tarred Peking's international image and resulted in severe strains with a number of important European states. British officials, for example, were driven out of

their chancery in Peking, and the building was sacked and burned in August 1971 by a Chinese mob protesting British policy in Hong Kong. The



Red Guard Diplomacy: Chinese demonstrators in front of British chancery; interior of chancery after it was burned by demonstrators in August 1967.



following year, sharp Chinese attacks against the De Gaulle government because of its suppression of antigovernment disturbances all but destroyed previous efforts by Paris to keep a cordial face on Sino-French relations.

In East Europe, Peking's increasingly strident position vis-a-vis the USSR made it extremely difficult for any bloc state to maintain a working relationship with the Chinese; the independent Tito regime remained alienated because

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of persistent Chinese diatribes against Yugoslav "revisionism." Consequently, it was hardly surprising that tentative plans by states such as Italy and West Germany to establish more effective trade ties or formal diplomatic relations with Peking did not get much beyond the planning stage.

Toward a New Policy

This implacable and almost completely unproductive Chinese posture changed abruptly following the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968. Peking, concerned over possible similar Soviet action against China, adopted an increasingly pragmatic and conventional foreign policy approach to deal with what it now saw as menacing Russian pressure directed against it. Although the prime portion of China's new effort was diverted to parrying Soviet military and political pressures in Asia, Peking also began to take some small but significant steps to improve its position in Europe. Peking voiced particular concern at the time that the USSR and the US were about to achieve a political detente in Europe that not only would exclude China's influence from the continent, but also would free both powers to devote greater attention to their mutual adversary, China.

To forestall this, Peking acted quickly to restore its strained relations with key European states. Specifically, the Chinese strove to develop what they now considered an important common cause with European states that were similarly attempting to protect their interests against Soviet or US might. Immediately following the Czechoslovak crisis, for example, high-ranking Chinese officials publicly reassured the Romanian Government—another target of Soviet pressure—of China's continued political support. At the same time, China began the first step of what was to become an unprecedented improvement in Sino-Yugoslav state relations by ceasing its long-standing vituperative attacks against the Tito government. In West Europe, the Chinese backed away from their hard position against the De Gaulle government and started to publicize

favorably the French President's criticism of US and Soviet pressure on European states.

In the following months, Peking underlined its support for Romania by sending an emissary—the first high-ranking official to travel abroad since the start of the Cultural Revolution—on a well-publicized visit to Bucharest. Peking then warmly received a visiting Yugoslav trade delegation and signed its first formal trade agreement with the Tito government in ten years. Elsewhere in East Europe, Peking resorted chiefly to well-timed and relatively sophisticated propaganda criticizing Moscow's heavy-handed policy, hoping to capitalize on anti-Soviet feeling following the Czechoslovak crisis. Meanwhile, Peking began a cosmetic restoration of its diplomatic ties with West European states, and started to return ambassadors to diplomatic posts there.

China's policy initiatives toward Europe truly accelerated after the start of Sino-Soviet border talks in Peking and the Sino-US ambassadorial discussions in Warsaw in late 1969. In undertaking these talks, Peking apparently judged that it must first reduce its dangerous frontier problem with Moscow and assess the seeming rapid change in US intentions vis-a-vis China's critical interests in Asia before devoting large-scale attention to a less immediately important area such as Europe. Apparently reassured, following the start of these discussions, Peking began to increase the pace and scope of its new European approach.

Recent Gains in West Europe

Perhaps the most significant departures in Chinese policy have been made toward the economically and politically powerful states in West Europe. Most notably, the Chinese have greatly expanded their diplomatic contacts with France; they gave a warm reception to a visiting French cabinet minister in July last year, and later received former foreign minister Couve de Murville. As a reciprocal visit, the Chinese this July announced that they would send a high-ranking

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official delegation to Paris later this year. More recently, there has been speculation in France that President Pompidou may visit China in late 1972 or 1973.

Peking also has increasingly muted its previous unproductive support for noisy Maoist political groups in France and elsewhere in West Europe in an apparent attempt to improve further its image with the ruling governments. While some signs of French discontent with China remain, particularly over the continuing meagerness of Sino-French trade, Peking continues to give a top priority to enhancing and publicizing its cordial political ties with the Paris government.

More surprisingly, over the past year the Chinese have shown an unprecedented interest in improving their long-cool relationship with Great Britain. Late last year the two sides began a series of high-level diplomatic discussions designed to remove outstanding disagreements and open the way to raising their diplomatic relations to the ambassadorial level. Although some bilateral problems remain, considerable progress has been achieved in eliminating ill feeling caused when the British detained Chinese Communist agitators in Hong Kong in recent years. London, for its part, now appears to be willing to close its consulate on Taiwan and adopt a pro-Peking posture in the United Nations—two preconditions China has long demanded before the establishment of ambassadorial relations. The Chinese press has muted many of its previous allegations that the British blindly follow Washington's lead in international affairs. With increasing frequency it now casts London in the role of an independent European power, safeguarding the interests of the continent against US pressure. In line with this, Peking has dropped its previous public ideological opposition to the Common Market, and has hailed British efforts to join the European Community, citing this as a further step in the development of a European force capable of asserting independence from the US and USSR.

Elsewhere, the Chinese have attempted to strike a forthcoming posture in order to pick up

additional diplomatic recognition and advance their international interests, particularly in the UN. Peking's compromise on a recognition formula with Canada last year was widely hailed in Europe. Italy, Austria, and Turkey have subsequently recognized Peking; Belgium and perhaps other states are moving in China's direction. Aside from the recognition angle, Peking is also interested in trade with certain European states. This summer the Chinese welcomed a large Italian economic and trade delegation for talks in Peking.

In contrast to its policy toward the majority of the larger states in West Europe, China's relations with its most important European trading partner, West Germany, remain frozen. Although China almost certainly sees the West German Government as a potentially useful friend in its search for international leverage, the Chinese have not substantially abandoned their previous distaste for official relations with Bonn. In fact, Peking over the past year has occasionally criticized the Soviet Union in strong terms for its attempts to come to terms with the West Germans. The Chinese apparently hope thereby to generate anti-Soviet feeling in East Europe, particularly in Pankow. Ostpolitik remains a sensitive subject for the Chinese; they see in it a way for the Soviet Union to consolidate—and expand—its position in Europe, and there is little chance Peking will attempt to woo Bonn while the opening to the east remains the centerpiece of West German foreign policy. Nonetheless, China's chief current interest in West Germany is trade, and Peking has not let the lack of formal relations with Bonn interfere with the large Sino-German trade flow.

Slower Advance in the East

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In East Europe, Chinese progress in building its influence has been less rapid, largely as a result of the firm control Moscow exerts on the foreign policy of most of these states. Last year,

China was attempting to cultivate the East German and Polish governments, but these initiatives subsequently withered on the vine. More recently, China has shown interest in the Kadar regime's quiet quest

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Mao greeting former French premier Couve de Murville (above) and Romanian President Ceausescu (below)



for increased freedom for maneuver, but Moscow in the past month has intervened directly to warn

Budapest against overly friendly ties with Peking, leading to the cancellation of a projected trip by a Hungarian minister to China. As a result of Soviet obstruction, Peking generally has had to content itself with consolidating relations with the more independent-minded governments of Romania and Yugoslavia, together with China's long-time ally, Albania. Late last year, Peking signed a large aid package with Bucharest,

marking China's first formal aid to a Warsaw Pact state since 1957. This spring, President Ceausescu received unusually lavish treatment during an eight-day tour of China, including an extraordinary personal escort by Chou En-lai. Chinese statements during the visit not only underlined close government ties with Romania, but publicly recognized Bucharest as a true Marxist-Leninist state—an extraordinary display of Chinese ideological flexibility because Peking privately still regards the Romanians as "revisionists."

On the heels of the Romanian visit, a Yugoslav delegation led by Belgrade's foreign secretary arrived in Peking for a well-publicized visit. This meeting consolidated state and economic relations between the two countries, although the Chinese earlier drew an ideological line by ignoring Yugoslav suggestions aimed toward re-establishing party ties. The Chinese, nonetheless, have shown considerable flexibility even on this score by scrupulously avoiding any public reference that might offend the Yugoslavs' view of themselves as responsible Communists.

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With respect to Albania, the Chinese have continued their large-scale economic and military assistance program, including the provision of MIG-21 fighters. The Chinese also have encouraged Tirana's efforts over the past year to expand its diplomatic ties among neighboring Communist states and in West Europe.

Peking was actively encouraging closer ties among Tirana, Bucharest and Belgrade. Although the Chinese almost certainly are well aware that the governments concerned are chary

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